

falling around her cheeks, busily unravelling the linen with her slender little fingers; happy, when the woof was easily undone, to witness the threads piled up in the basket, forming a little white mountain.

However the Prussians were expected. For a month past it had been given out that they were marching towards Rouen. When once communication had been cut off, what would become of our grandmother, whose great age had kept her at the other end of Normandy? Rent with conflicting affections, my mother still hesitated. A few kind words from the Doctor decided her, and I was once more alone. Alone, I am wrong to speak thus, for had I not Paul V . . ., now my companion in suffering as he had formerly been of my games and pleasures? The poor fellow was very ill, the inflammation had spread from his foot to his leg; they had been compelled to bind him to his bed to prevent his moving, and he ate nothing. His strength visibly declined. When I watched his hollow eyes, his wan and sallow forehead, and his emaciated features through the white bed-curtains, I could not but fear for him. I, on the contrary, felt my appetite revive, and catching hold of the little wooden bar, which in hospital beds assists the patients to raise themselves, I would get into a sitting posture. One day he asked me to sing. Sing! I could not have done it; but in a low tone of voice I recited a few of the songs we liked so much and which but lately we sang together. "Le lac" by Lamartine, and the poems of Alfred de Musset; then I spoke of the past. Carried away with the tide of my recollections I reminded him of the College of Saint-Barbe, where we had both been educated. Then I spoke of our youth, of our first days of liberty which we spent so gaily. A thousand details came into my mind; the recollections revived me and wholly absorbed in my egotistical pleasure I still went on. Paul V . . . said not a word. Leaning his head on his hands, and with eyes full of tears,

he smiled sadly at these pictures of a past which it was pleasant for me to conjure up, but which saddened him, for he was going to die.

At day-break, I was wakened by the croaking of the crows that had alighted on the bare trees of the avenue. I saw them wheeling slowly round in sinister flight ere perching on the branches, and their large black wings grazed the window-panes. At the same time, in the yards of the neighbouring barracks, the clarions of the hussars sound the reveillé, at times interrupted by the distant neighing of the horses. A balloon had arrived bringing delegates from the Government at Paris. Enthusiasm was at its height in the whole town, the crowd hurried to the station, and we could hear the cheering and hurrahs from a distance. All this mixed us up in some degree with the war; and even in our misfortunes we experienced a strange comfort in putting up prayers for France. On the 26th of November I received a letter which bore the red cross seal of the ambulances—it was from R . . ., another of our comrades with whom we had left Paris. In his first engagement, at Saint-Laurent des Bois, he had been wounded by a musket-ball in the thigh; his wound was not dangerous, however, and he hoped soon to return to face the enemy. The 20th *Chasseurs* had conducted themselves bravely throughout, and M . . . and George E . . ., two of ours, were to be promoted. He, in conclusion, hailed the day when, once more reunited, we five could shake hands and relate our sufferings.

This wish, alas! was never to be realised. I handed Paul V . . . our friend's letter, but noticed that instead of reading it he muttered incoherently. Two days before hemorrhage had set in, which had only been stopped with great difficulty. The overseer whose duty it was to watch us had absented himself. At the cry which Paul V . . . uttered when he felt his life ebbing away, the feeble old man whose bed